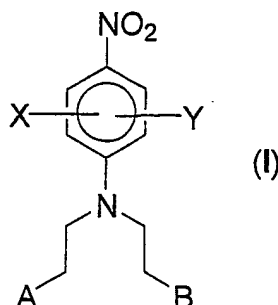


What we claim is

1. A nitroaniline-based unsymmetrical mustard represented by the general formula (I);



wherein X represents one of the groups NO_2 , CN , or SO_2R^1 , where R^1 represents a C_{1-6} -lower alkyl optionally substituted with one or more hydroxy and/or one or more amino groups and wherein when R^1 represents a tertiary amine the N-oxide derivative of the tertiary amine is further included;

Y represents one of the groups OR^2 , NHCOR^2 , $\text{CONR}^2\text{CO}_2\text{R}^3$, CONR^2 morpholide, CONHR^2 , CONR^2R^3 , CONHOR^2 , $\text{CONHSO}_2\text{R}^2$, SO_2NH_2 , SO_2NHR^2 or $\text{SO}_2\text{NR}^2\text{R}^3$ wherein each R^2 and R^3 independently represent a H, C_{1-6} -lower alkyl optionally substituted with one or more hydroxy and/or one or more amino groups; and

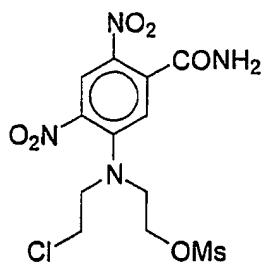
A and B each independently represent halogen, OSO_2R^4 , OSO_2NH_2 , OSO_2NHR^4 or $\text{OSO}_2\text{NR}^4\text{R}^5$, wherein each R^4 and R^5 independently represent a C_{1-6} -lower alkyl optionally substituted with one or more hydroxy and/or one or more amino groups and wherein when each R^4 and R^5 independently represents a tertiary amine the N-oxide derivative of the tertiary amine is further included;

and pharmaceutically acceptable derivatives and salts thereof;

with the proviso

(i) that $\text{A} \neq \text{B}$ and

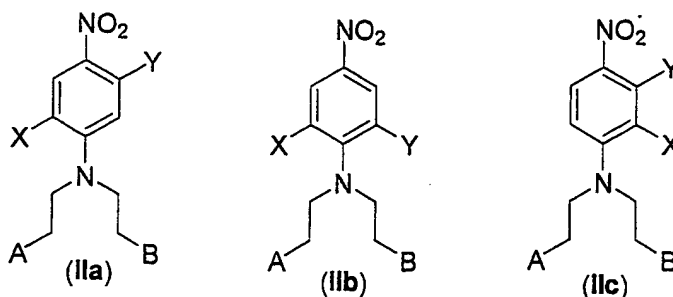
that



is excluded.

2. The nitroaniline-based unsymmetrical mustard as claimed in claim 1 represented by one of formulae (IIa-IIc)

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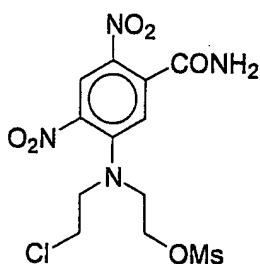
wherein X, Y, A and B are as defined in claim 1 for a compound of Formula (I); and pharmaceutically acceptable derivatives and salts thereof;

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with the proviso

- (i) that $A \neq B$ and

that



is excluded as a compound of Formula (IIa).

15

3. The nitroaniline-based unsymmetrical mustard as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 selected from:

5-[(2-Bromoethyl)(2-chloroethyl)amino]-2,4-dinitrobenzamide,

2-[5-(Aminocarbonyl)(2-bromoethyl)-2,4-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate,

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2-[5-(Aminocarbonyl)(2-iodoethyl)-2,4-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate,

2-((2-Bromoethyl)5-{[(2-hydroxyethyl)amino]carbonyl}-2,4-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,

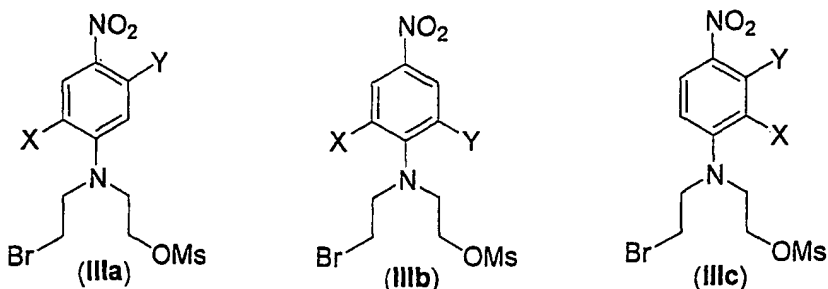
2-((2-Bromoethyl)5-{[(3-hydroxypropyl)amino]carbonyl}-2,4-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,

- 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-5-[[2,3-dihydroxypropyl]amino]carbonyl)-2,4-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 2-[2-(Aminocarbonyl)(2-chloroethyl)-4,6-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 5 2-[2-(Aminocarbonyl)(2-bromoethyl)-4,6-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-2-[[2-(hydroxyethyl)amino]carbonyl]-4,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 2-((2-Iodoethyl)-2-[[2-(hydroxyethyl)amino]carbonyl]-4,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 10 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-2-[[2-(hydroxypropyl)amino]carbonyl]-4,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-2-[[2,3-dihydroxypropyl]amino]carbonyl)-4,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 2-[(2-Bromoethyl)-2-([3-(4-morpholinyl)propyl]amino)carbonyl]-4,6-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 15 Methyl 3-{[2-((2-chloroethyl){2-[(methylsulfonyl)oxy]ethyl}amino)-3,5-dinitrobenzoyl]amino}propanoate,
- Methyl 3-{[2-((2-bromoethyl){2-[(methylsulfonyl)oxy]ethyl}amino)-3,5-dinitrobenzoyl]amino}propanoate,
- 20 2-[3-(Aminocarbonyl)(2-chloroethyl)-2,4-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 2-[3-(Aminocarbonyl)(2-bromoethyl)-2,6-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-3-[[2-(hydroxyethyl)amino]carbonyl]-2,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 2-((2-Chloroethyl)-3-[[3-(hydroxypropyl)amino]carbonyl]-2,4-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 25 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-3-[[3-(hydroxypropyl)amino]carbonyl]-2,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-3-[[4-(hydroxybutyl)amino]carbonyl]-2,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 30 2-((2-Chloroethyl)-3-[[2,3-dihydroxypropyl]amino]carbonyl)-2,4-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
- 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-3-[[2,3-dihydroxypropyl]amino]carbonyl)-2,4-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,

2-[(2-Chloroethyl)-3-({[3-(4-morpholinyl)propyl]amino}carbonyl)-2,4-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate and
 2-[(2-Bromoethyl)-3-({[3-(4-morpholinyl)propyl]amino}carbonyl)-2,4-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate.

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4. The nitroaniline-based unsymmetrical mustard as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 selected from a compound represented by one of formulae (IIIa-IIIc)



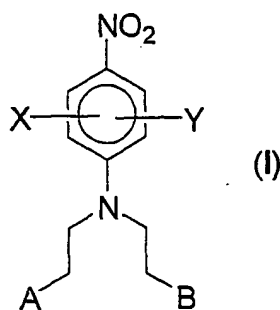
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wherein X, Y, are as defined in claim 1 for a compound of Formula (I); and pharmaceutically acceptable derivatives and salts thereof.

5. The nitroaniline-based unsymmetrical mustard as claimed in claim 4 selected from
 2-[5-(Aminocarbonyl)(2-bromoethyl)-2,4-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate,
 2-((2-Bromoethyl)5-{{(2-hydroxyethyl)amino}carbonyl}-2,4-dinitroanilino)ethyl
 methanesulfonate,
 2-((2-Bromoethyl)5-{{(3-hydroxypropyl)amino}carbonyl}-2,4-dinitroanilino)ethyl
 methanesulfonate,
 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-5-{{(2,3-dihydroxypropyl)amino}carbonyl}-2,4-
 dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
 2-[2-(Aminocarbonyl)(2-bromoethyl)-4,6-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate,
 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-2-{{(2-hydroxyethyl)amino}carbonyl}-4,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl
 methanesulfonate;
 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-2-{{(2-hydroxypropyl)amino}carbonyl}-4,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl
 methanesulfonate,
 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-2-{{(2,3-dihydroxypropyl)amino}carbonyl}-4,6-
 dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,

- 2-[(2-Bromoethyl)-2-({[3-(4-morpholinyl)propyl]amino}carbonyl)-4,6-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate,
 Methyl 3-{[2-((2-bromoethyl){2-[(methylsulfonyl)oxy]ethyl}amino)-3,5-dinitrobenzoyl]amino}propanoate,
 5 2-[3-(Aminocarbonyl)(2-bromoethyl)-2,6-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate,
 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-3-{[(2-hydroxyethyl)amino]carbonyl}-2,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-3-{[(3-hydroxypropyl)amino]carbonyl}-2,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
 10 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-3-{[(4-hydroxybutyl)amino]carbonyl}-2,6-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate,
 2-((2-Bromoethyl)-3-{[(2,3-dihydroxypropyl)amino]carbonyl}-2,4-dinitroanilino)ethyl methanesulfonate and
 2-[(2-Bromoethyl)-3-({[3-(4-morpholinyl)propyl]amino}carbonyl)-2,4-dinitroanilino]ethyl methanesulfonate.
 15

6. A method of preparing a nitroaniline-based unsymmetrical mustard represented by the general formula (I);



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wherein X represents one of the groups NO_2 , CN , or SO_2R^1 , where R^1 represents a C_{1-6} -lower alkyl optionally substituted with one or more hydroxy and/or one or more amino groups and wherein when R^1 represents a tertiary amine the N-oxide derivative of the tertiary amine is further included;
 Y represents one of the groups OR^2 , NHCOR^2 , $\text{CONR}^2\text{CO}_2\text{R}^3$, $\text{CONR}^2\text{morpholide}$, CONHR^2 , CONR^2R^3 , CONHOR^2 , $\text{CONHSO}_2\text{R}^2$, SO_2NH_2 , SO_2NHR^2 or $\text{SO}_2\text{NR}^2\text{R}^3$ wherein each R^2 and R^3 independently represent a H, C_{1-6} -lower alkyl optionally substituted with one or more hydroxy and/or one or more amino groups; and

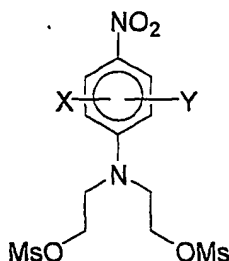
A and B each independently represent halogen, OSO_2R^4 , OSO_2NH_2 , OSO_2NHR^4 or $\text{OSO}_2\text{NR}^4\text{R}^5$, wherein each R^4 and R^5 independently represent a C_{1-6} -lower alkyl optionally substituted with one or more hydroxy and/or one or more amino groups and wherein when each R^4 and R^5 independently represents a tertiary amine the N-oxide derivative of the tertiary amine is further included;
 5 and pharmaceutically acceptable derivatives and salts thereof;
 with the proviso

(i) that $\text{A} \neq \text{B}$

the method including the step of

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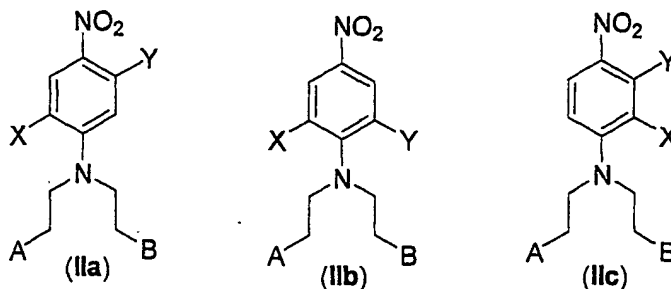
reacting a compound of



with an amount of an alkali metal halide in a polar solvent to give an unsymmetrical halo-mesylate compound.
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7. The method of preparing a nitroaniline-based unsymmetrical mustard represented by the general formula represented by one of formulae (IIa-IIc) as claimed in claim 2 or claim 3

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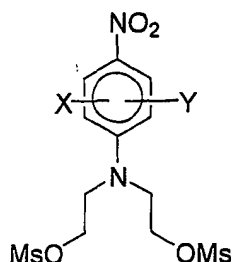


wherein X, Y, A and B are as defined in claim 1 for a compound of Formula (I); and pharmaceutically acceptable derivatives and salts thereof;

with the proviso

(i) that $A \neq B$ and

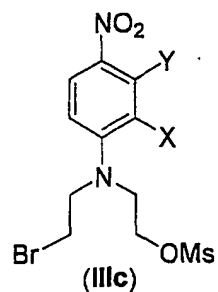
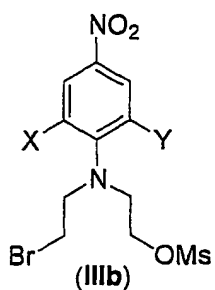
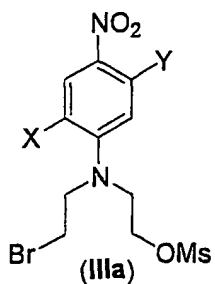
the method including the step of
reacting a compound of



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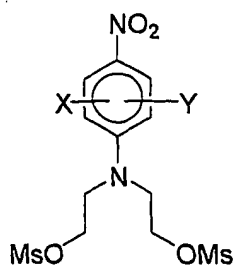
with an amount of an alkali metal halide or mesylate halide in a polar solvent to give
an unsymmetrical halo-mesylate compound.

- 10 8. The method of preparing a nitroaniline-based unsymmetrical mustard represented
by one of formulae (IIIa-IIIc) as claimed in claim 4 or claim 5



- 15 wherein X, Y, are as defined in claim 1 for a compound of Formula (I); and
pharmaceutically acceptable derivatives and salts thereof; the method including the
step of

reacting a compound of



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with an amount of LiBr in a polar solvent to give a bromo mesylate of one of formulae (IIIa-IIIc).

- 5 9. The method as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 8 wherein the polar solvent is selected from acetonitrile, dimethylformamide, ethyl acetate, triethylamine, acetone and mixtures thereof.
- 10 10. The method as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 9 wherein the alkali metal halide is selected from one or more of the following; LiCl, LiBr, NaI and NaBr.
11. A compound of formula (I) obtained by any one of the methods as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 10.
- 15 12. A method including the step of administering a compound of Formula I as defined in any one of claims 1 to 5 in a therapeutically effective amount to tumour cells in a subject for the use as prodrugs suitable for GDEPT (gene-dependent enzyme-prodrug therapy) in conjunction with at least one nitroreductase enzyme, as a hypoxia-selective cytotoxin.
- 20 13. The method according to claim 12 wherein the nitroreductase enzyme is encoded for by the *nfsB* gene of either *E.Coli* or by *Clostridia* species.
- 25 14. A method including the step of administering a compound of Formula I as defined in claim 1 in a therapeutically effective amount to target tumour cells in a subject for the use as prodrugs suitable for GDEPT (gene-dependent enzyme-prodrug therapy) in conjunction with at least one nitroreductase enzyme, as an anticancer agent.
- 30 15. The method according to claim 14 wherein the nitroreductase enzyme is encoded for by the *nfsB* gene of either *E.Coli* or by *Clostridia* species.

16. A method of cell ablation therapy utilising at least one nitroreductase enzyme, wherein the method includes the step of administering a compound of Formula I as claimed in claim 1 in a "therapeutically effective amount" to ablate tumour cells in tissue in a subject, wherein said tissue expresses at least one nitroreductase enzyme.

17. The method according to claim 16 wherein the nitroreductase enzyme is encoded for by the *nfsB* gene of either *E.Coli* or by *Clostridia* species.

18. The method according to claim 16 or claim 17 wherein the cell ablation therapy provides a substantially minimal bystander effect.

19. A pharmaceutical composition including a therapeutically effective amount of a compound of formula I as defined in claim 1 and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, adjuvant, carrier, buffer or stabiliser.

20. The use in the manufacture of a medicament of an effective amount of a compound of Formula I as defined in claim 1 for use in GDEPT to target cancer cells in a subject in need thereof.

21. The use in the manufacture of a medicament of an effective amount of a compound of Formula I as defined in claim 1 for use in cell ablation therapy to target cancer cells in a subject in need thereof.